

INTERTOWN RURAL TRANSPORT SOLUTION

MAP OF THE PROJECT



PROJECT SUMMARY



The Intertown Rural Transport Solution (IRTS) addresses severe mobility challenges in rural Western Cape communities where long distances, low population density, high transport costs, and unsafe travel options limit access to healthcare, education and employment. It introduces a structured, scheduled operating model into a currently fragmented and largely unscheduled rural transport environment, reducing spatial inequality and unlocking economic potential through a more predictable and integrated intertown minibus taxi (MBT) service.

The solution is based on a hub and spoke operating model, tailored to low density rural contexts and variable travel demand. As an initial implementation phase, the IRTS will be rolled out and operationalised in Beaufort West during the 2026/27 financial year, with the town serving as the central hub for surrounding settlements in the Central Karoo District.

The initial service will incorporate technology-enabled features such as vehicle tracking to improve safety, reliability, and operational visibility. Over time, the programme supports the gradual formalisation and stabilisation of rural MBT services with the Western Cape Infrastructure Strategy 2050 (WCIS 2050) and broader provincial priorities for equitable, sustainable, and integrated transport development.

PROJECT STATUS



The Intertown Rural Transport Solution has progressed beyond the business case development phase and is now moving into early implementation. Full business cases have been completed, and limited funding has been secured to operationalise an initial pilot service in Beaufort West, identified as the primary service hub within the Central Karoo District.

The relevant intergovernmental agreements and institutional arrangements between the appropriate spheres of government are currently being finalised to enable rollout during the 2026/27 financial year. In parallel, the necessary procurement and contracting processes have been undertaken to appoint a suitable service provider to operationalise the service.

The initial Beaufort West service will be implemented as a pilot phase, with the primary objective of testing operational assumptions and ascertaining demand for inter town public transport within the Central Karoo District. Insights from this pilot will inform service design, governance arrangements, and financial sustainability considerations, enabling a phased, evidence-based expansion to additional routes and areas over time.

FINANCIAL NEEDS



Approximate value: R 33.1 million

The project is estimated to cost approximately R3 million for the first year of implementation, increasing to R17 million in the second year with the addition of services in Theewaterskloof and other local municipalities in the Central Karoo. Full implementation funding was not received, and an initial service is planned for implementation in the 2026/2027 FY.

Key expenditure areas include capital investments (such as vehicle-related systems, branding, and infrastructure upgrades), operational costs (including payments to operators, concessions for vulnerable passengers, driver training, and marketing), and development costs associated with establishing the required operational and institutional arrangements.

Costs are expected to scale over time as services expand, with upfront investment required to support initial rollout and system development. Securing sustainable funding, including municipal contributions and long-term operational support, will be critical to ensure successful implementation and programme viability.

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TIMELINE

Q3-Q4 2025/2026

Finalise business cases for Beaufort West and Theewaterskloof, secure funding and municipal buy-in, and complete route planning, institutional model, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks, and government agreements.

End of 2025/2026

Prepare for the initial rollout of the Beaufort West service. This includes readiness activities to support pilot implementation.

2026/27 and beyond

Procure tracking systems, infrastructure upgrades (e.g. wayfinding), and train drivers where required. Operationalisation of the Initial Service in Beaufort West. Based on pilot performance, the service model will be refined and progressively expanded to additional routes and municipalities, subject to funding availability.

PUBLIC/ PRIVATE SECTOR OPPORTUNITY



The Intertown Rural Transport Solution creates multiple opportunities for collaboration between government and private stakeholders. Public sector involvement focuses on funding, governance and policy alignment, while private sector partners can contribute through technology solutions (vehicle tracking and infrastructure upgrades such as shelters and interchanges). There is scope for advertising and branding on vehicles and shelters, as well as microenterprise development at interchange points, thereby stimulating rural economies. Additionally, partnerships with health services and local businesses can enhance service integration and sustainability.

KEY PARTIES



Western Cape Mobility Department (WCMD) – Project lead, responsible for planning, governance, and funding coordination.

Private Sector Partners – Potential contributors for technology solutions (ticketing, tracking), and advertising opportunities.

Department of Infrastructure (DoI) – Strategic oversight and alignment with provincial infrastructure plans.

Community Stakeholders – Rural residents and local businesses benefiting from improved connectivity and economic opportunities.

Local Municipalities – Beaufort West Municipality, Prince Albert Municipality, Laingsburg Municipality and Theewaterskloof Municipality, providing local support, infrastructure, and stakeholder engagement.

Minibus Taxi (MBT) Industry – Existing operators integrated into the scheduled service model, ensuring local economic participation.